

Charter Commission

Charter Members
George A. Lewis, Chair
Bruce M Conque, Vice Chair
Odon L. Bacque
Dale Bourgeois
Karen Carson
Greg Manuel
D. Keith Miller
Stephen J. Oats
Aaron Walker

c/o City-Parish Council Office P.O. Box 4017-C Lafayette, LA 70502 • Email: CharterCommission@LafayetteLA.gov • Website: www.LafayetteLA.gov

REGULAR MEETING

LAFAYETTE CHARTER COMMISSION

Email: CharterCommission@LafayetteLa.gov

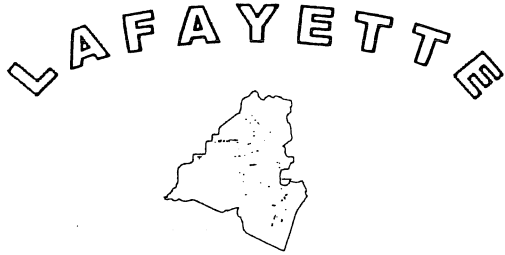
705 W. University Ave, Ted A. Ardoin City-Parish Council Auditorium

Monday, October 18, 2010

5:30 p.m.

AGENDA

1. Call to order
2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
3. Comments/Announcements from Commission Members
4. Consideration and discussion of structure of governance of the Consolidated Government
5. General comments from the public on Consolidation
6. Next meeting date
7. Adjourn




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TO: Charter Commissioners

FROM: George Lewis, Chair 

DATE: October 1, 2010

SUBJ: *CONSOLIDATION / GOVERNANCE OPTIONS*

The attached is a chart I have prepared with some alternatives to consolidation ranging from where we are today to where we were fourteen years ago. This is not intended to be all inclusive; other options are welcomed.

The Jacksonville model, in the second column, is from the Jacksonville/Duval County, Florida consolidation. Commissioner Bruce Conque will brief us on it on October 11.

attachment (f)

| GOVERNANCE OPTIONS | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| Present | Establish Separate Utility Commission | Jacksonville Model | Add City Council Only | Separate Governance Combined Operations | Total Deconsolidation |
| Mayor/President (1) | Mayor/President (1) | President (1) | Mayor/President (1) | Parish President (1) Mayor of City of Lafayette (1) | Parish President (1) Mayor of City of Lafayette (1) |
| CAO (1) | CAO (1) | CAO (1) | CAO (1) | CAO (2) | CAO (2) |
| City/Parish Council (9) | City/Parish Council (9) | County Council (19) | Parish Council (9) City Council (5) | Parish Council (9) City Council (5) | Parish Council (9) City Council (5) |
| City/Parish Clerk (1) | City/Parish Clerk (1) | County Clerk (1) | City/Parish Clerk (1) | Parish Clerk (1) City Clerk (1) | Parish Clerk (1) City Clerk (1) |
| Consolidated Operations | Consolidated Operations | Consolidated Operations | Consolidated Operations | Consolidated Operations under City of Lafayette | Parish Operations City Operations |
| LPUA (1) | Independent Utility Commission | Independent Utility Commission | No LPUA No Utility Commission | No LPUA No Utility Commission | No LPUA No Utility Commission |

October 12, 2010

Members of the Charter Commission:

Thank you for your participation last night and for sharing with each of us what you individually felt about the governance issue. It seems that a majority of the commission feels that the City of Lafayette should have its own government. Bruce's presentation would have a City Council and a Mayor and a Parish Council with a manager. This is one option. Other options are presented on the chart that I had prepared week before last.

As I noted last night, I think that the simplest and easiest solution to this issue is Column Number 4 where the only change in the governance structure is to establish a separate 5 member City council but keep one Mayor/President position and one CAO and continue the consolidation of services. That would solve the issue of LPUA – it would be governed by the City Council, all of whom would be residents of the City of Lafayette and whose constituents would also all be residents of the City of Lafayette. This would also solve the zoning issue whereby only City officials would act on zoning cases. There would be absolutely no affect on other municipalities in the Parish and no affect on the unincorporated areas of the Parish. Although it would increase the number of elected officials, their duties and responsibilities would be totally separate. In order to reduce the cost effect of this, I would propose that the salary of a Parish council member be set at no more that one-half of the salary of a City Council member. All employees of the consolidated government would continue to be City of Lafayette employees. I would propose that we mandate an independent, professional cost allocation study at least every two years.

Karen asked me what I would propose about the residence of the Mayor/President. Under what I am proposing, that person would be a resident of the Parish which might mean a resident of Lafayette, or a resident of Youngsville, or someone from the unincorporated area of the Parish.

To me, this is just the simplest thing we can do. It affects no one but the citizens of the City of Lafayette. And, Bruce, I would not get into the semantics of urban service district and general service district. The citizens of the area municipalities just want to reside in what they would call a town or city. This proposal is the same as Bruce's except I would not include a Parish manager – I think that would lead to friction and he/she wouldn't

have anything really to manage – and I wouldn't get into the service district language. We need to keep our proposal as simple as possible without confusing the issues. Under the concept listed above, citizens of Lafayette would have direct access to officials responsible for administering their affairs.

As for other changes I would like to see made in the Charter (in addition to some of the suggestions from the departments):

1. A simplification of the description of the duties of the City and the Parish whereby we wouldn't try to list every department/function that might come up. Rather, it would give the administration flexibility to organize operations in the most efficient manner (with Council approval, of course).
2. I would add a requirement that a Charter Commission be appointed every ten years to review the charter for changes.
3. I would also like to change the succession if the Mayor/President position became vacant. I have seen somewhere (which I cannot locate right now) a plan whereby the CAO fills the position until a special election can be called. This makes sense because (a) the CAO is already employed by the government and (b) he/she would be totally familiar with the programs and directions of the departed Mayor/President. Thrusting a Council member into the vacant position could disrupt that person's life because it would have to be a full time appointment.
4. Although it probably won't be popular, I would also like to see the salaries for the elected officials set for the next four year term by the outgoing Council(s). Although it is obviously legal, it just doesn't seem right that a sitting Council can increase its salary. You run for the job knowing what it pays for the next four years. If it is too little, you don't run.

I am writing this to set forth my thoughts because I am going in for eye surgery tomorrow and don't know what shape I will be in later in the week. I am supposed to be OK and have been cleared (pending further notice) to not miss any meeting of the Commission.

George Lewis

October 13, 2010

Members of the Charter Commission:

I, too, would like to thank you for your support of the City of Lafayette having its own government.

George, I will concede my "services district" proposal and agree that it would be a tough political sell. However, I will continue my campaign for equal and fair treatment for the City of Lafayette. We must have a City Council and a Mayor as does every other municipality in Lafayette Parish.

Your proposal would address the governing of the City and the LPUA and zoning issues and I appreciate your support. However, the suggestion that we keep one Mayor/President position and one CAO and continue the consolidation of services by placing City of Lafayette employees under a Parish administration ignores a hard learned political history lesson.

You acknowledge that the Mayor/President would be a resident of the Parish who might be a resident of Lafayette, or a resident of Youngsville, or someone from the unincorporated area of the Parish. And to the detriment of the City of Lafayette that is what occurred in the first eight years of LCG.

Parish President Walter Comeaux was not a City of Lafayette resident and, thus, had no vested interest in our development. In fact, he gave away the one "carrot" for City growth by providing wholesale water to most of the Parish. The result was that the City of Lafayette actually decreased in its percentage of Parish population from 66% to 54% under LCG.

Under your suggestion, City of Lafayette employees would be placed under the control of a Parish administration; again at the literal and political expense of the City. I agree with you that "we need to keep our proposal as simple as possible without confusing the issues" but strongly disagree with your contention that, under your concept, "citizens of Lafayette would have direct access to officials responsible for administering their affairs." They might have access; but with an administration elected parish wide, City taxpayers still would have no control of the government services for which they pay the majority of the cost.

The City of Lafayette has sacrificed its sovereignty for the greater good of the whole under Lafayette Consolidated Government. Fellow Commissioners, let's continue our effort to treat the City of Lafayette fairly and equally under whatever structure of government which we may recommend.

Thank you for your time and interest in serving on the Lafayette Charter Commission.

Bruce Conque

Odon L Bacque, Jr
138 Teche Dr
Lafayette, LA 70503

October 14, 2010

Members of the Charter commission:

First let me apologize for missing the last two meetings. I had, what I believed would be, minor surgery, and my recovery period was much longer than anticipated. I do plan to be at the next meeting, but wanted you to have my thoughts on the process, so far.

It was my belief that our research, talking to all the departments that work under the charter, would guide our discussion. If there was a problem with the charter, these people could, and would let us know. It was interesting to me that all the suggestions for change, except for LUS, seemed to be minor in scope. I do not recall ever hearing a department head advocating for separate governance for the city and parish. Yet now I find that several commission members believe that separate governance should be the basis of our recommendations. Since this has never been suggested as necessary by any LCG employee, it appears that this option lies in a personal belief, held by those members, that separate governance will be better. I am not convinced of that yet.

The only string that binds all of us together is that we are residents of Lafayette Parish. In my mind, anything that we suggest to the citizens should respond to this question; "is it better for the parish"; not as we are hearing; "is it better for the city"? I question the logic, of the often heard allegation, that a council member, elected from the unincorporated area, cannot fairly represent the interests of city residents. That issue will always be based on who is elected. I suggest that a council member, elected by only city residents, may be just as truculent, and our history of administration vs. council has many instances of that happening.

The ultimate decision of the form of government will lie with a vote of the residents of the entire parish, and an assertion that one form of government will be best for the city, I suspect will fall on deaf ears with non city residents. I think we need to change our focus from what is best for the city, to what is best for the parish; and, so far, I have not heard anyone focus on that issue.

On the issue of LPUA, I strongly feel that allowing elected officials, with parochial interests, to govern the system, is a problem waiting to happen. I would feel much more confident, long term, if an appointed board, consisting of individuals with a proven record of business expertise and accomplishment, were the governing authority. I would like to see a CPA, an attorney, a banker, and several other professions represented on the board, and I would pay them board fees, and have them subject to fiduciary standards. LUS should have a board of directors, with the talents to help guide it into the future, not a board elected based on parochialism. This, to me, is a much more critical issue than self determination for the city of Lafayette.

I think that Bruce's concept, less the additional elected members, is a viable one. I am still not convinced that an additional layer of governance, with its own additional bureaucracy, is the answer, but I am willing to listen to alternatives. I urge you to keep in mind that the final decision is not ours, but the citizens of the entire parish, and they want to know, what is best for me.

Don Bacque